United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement by the International Committee for Arab-Israeli Reconciliation, a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62515 (E) 080110

Please recycle

Statement

1. The International Committee for Arab-Israeli Reconciliation is a human rights organization dedicated to peace with justice. Although our primary goal is to attain a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict our vision is broader. That vision inspired us to participate in the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development. We enthusiastically extend our friendship and cooperation to other members of civil society and non-governmental organizations that have dedicated their services to the cause of social justice and equality. We view a society as a collection of individuals united by a common goal, which can be compared to a long linked chain. Like a chain, a society is only as strong as its weakest link. The strength or weakness, productivity or unproductivity, peaceful or hostile nature of a given society largely depends on its individual members. The family is a building block of a society. An individual is born into a family and then moves into society. Thus an individual is the connecting link between the family and society. Because of certain common beliefs, interests and culture, families form groups within society. If these groups of people do not communicate or interact with other groups in the society, each will remain isolated and over the time a wall of fear and suspicion will build surrounding each isolated group, thus paving the way of domination of one group over the other, generating a hierarchy of domination. Over the course of human history domination of one group over the other has been observed again and again. Therefore, to make the society a better place to live in, individual components or groups must move from isolation to integration. The concept of social integration, which according to the expert group meeting on creating an inclusive society, represents the attempt not to make people adjust to society but rather to ensure that society is accepting of all people. It is a common observation that if a group of people in a society is kept in isolation and pushed below the benchmark of social justice, it will limit the advance of the rest of society and eventually bring such advancement to a halt. Therefore, integration and not isolation is beneficial to all in the society.

2. To attain social integration we propose the following:

(a) Acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are empowered with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood";

(b) Members belonging to different groups or components of a society should be encouraged to communicate with one another, join each other's social functions and discuss matters of mutual interest from a common platform. This will promote friendship and understanding among the members of different groups in a society and will also help remove the wall of fear and suspicion that may exist between groups in a society and thus pave the way for social integration;

(c) One way to enhance social integration is to make all members of society take part in projects of common social interest. Illiteracy, disease, polluted air or a filthy environment are detrimental to all members of the society. So a common fight against a common enemy will enhance social interaction and promote social integration;

(d) The basic mechanism driving social change is the increasing awareness leading to better organization. Just as the life of an individual can evolve, so can the

condition of society evolve and progress. Social integration is enhanced when each member of society gets the equal benefit of technological development;

(e) Social integration requires the recognition that each human entity not only has physical but also spiritual needs. Integration will not be possible if individuals are prevented from pursuing their spiritual needs. If an individual member is happy and free, society as a whole will be happy and free. At the 1995 World Summit for Social Development it was rightly noted that, societies must respond more effectively to the material and spiritual needs of individuals, and that intolerance and religious hatred pose severe threats to human security and well-being;

(f) Proper practice and interpretation of religions can play a very important role in uniting peoples. If individuals belonging to different religions freely intermingle, they will understand each other better. Different religions can be viewed as different paths leading to the same destination. This kind of religious interpretation will not only bring social integration but will also result in peace and harmony among different communities, resulting in a better world in which to live.